

### Claims

1. A method for operating an online dating service in which two users of the service are capable of communicating with one another online, the  
5 method comprising transferring value from one of the users to another user.
2. A method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the two users are both online when the value is transferred from one user to the other.
3. A method as claimed in Claim 1 or 2, wherein it is a condition of the transfer of value that the user to whom the value is being transferred is  
10 prepared to communicate online with the user from whom the value is being transferred for a predetermined minimum length of time.
4. A method as claimed in Claim 3, wherein the predetermined minimum length of time is based on the value transferred.
5. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the  
15 value transferred is monetary value.
6. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the transfer of value is represented in the service as a virtual version of a real life transaction.
7. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the  
20 users can choose the amount of value to be transferred.
8. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the service provides each user with an online account in which their respective balance is held, the transfer of value being effected by a transfer from one user's account to another's.
- 25 9. A method as claimed in Claim 8, wherein users can add credit to their account or withdraw value from their account.

10. A method as claimed in Claim 9, wherein value is withdrawn in the form of non-monetary vouchers.

11. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the operator of the service can take a commission from at least one transfer of value.

12. A method for operating an online dating service in which two users of the service who capable of communicating with one another online substantially as herein described and with reference to the accompanying drawings.

13. A computer system for operating an online dating service in which two users of the service who are capable of communicating with one another online, the system comprising server means including respective stores for value associated with each of the users and means for transferring value from the store of one of the users to the store of another user.

14. A computer system as claimed in Claim 13, wherein the system additionally comprises a number of server components which are combined in a single server application.

15. A computer system as claimed in Claim 14, wherein the server components are located at a single server device.

16. A computer system for operating an online dating service in which two users of the service who are capable of communicating with one another online substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

17. A computer program comprising computer code which when executed on a computer system causes the system to operate in accordance with the method of any one of Claims 1 to 12.